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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Wednesday, October 16, 1940

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Low-Income Women Earn Christmas Spending Money." Information from the Farm Security Administration, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

Christmas spending money! Have you ever seen a woman who didn't want money to spend at Christmas? I haven't. But sometimes money is hard to get, even the little that low-income women spend.

Today the Farm Security Administration reports some of the ways its low-income women are earning Christmas money. Perhaps the most unusual method is that of boarding goldfish and canaries. A woman in Pennsylvania runs this odd boarding house. She is particularly busy every fall because in her community a number of people work in town and take fall vacations. Naturally these people don't want to take their goldfish and canaries along, yet they don't want them neglected while they're away.

So they find it convenient to leave their pets at this woman's house. They know that here, Caruso or Cleo will be in good hands and will get regular meals of bird seed and fish wafers - and a clean cage or fresh bowl of water every day. For her work the woman will earn several dollars and earmark every penny of it "For Christmas Only." This woman herself doesn't keep cats or dogs but a neighbor of hers does, so together they about take care of the pet situation in their community.

Another woman does occasional laundry work on a farm where there are some peacocks, so she sells peacock feathers to earn Christmas money. Not for milady's hat, but for fish hook flies. She collects the feathers every fall during the peacock molting season, and sells them to a sporting good factory. The factory pays her 25 cents a feather and this amounts to about three or four dollars a peacock.

Speaking of fish bait, a number of Farm Security women who live near resorts often furnish sportsmen bait for extra income. One catches cockroaches. Ugh! I

don't like them, too! But the fish like them and this woman earns about half a dollar a hundred for catching them. Other women or their children catch crickets and crawfish to sell fishermen. Some catch minnows. Of course, people who catch fish bait for Christmas earnings are those who live down South where weather is warm and fall is as good a time as any to go fishing.

Speaking of fish, a young Mississippi farm wife who lives near a resort center makes fish nets to sell. This time of year when evenings are long and neighbors come to chat, she sits knitting fish nets. I'll bet she even knits fish net hats -- I don't know.

Well, fall is the time for bittersweet, isn't it? Farm Security knows some women who earn Christmas money gathering bittersweet. They sell big bunches of it to florist shops or to people they know in town. Other women gather mistletoe and holly. Some cut cedar branches and make lovely Christmas wreaths, trimmed with holly berries.

Along a different line, an FSA woman earns spending money by selling refreshments to a neighborhood ball team. The players and their friends come every Saturday afternoon to play a home talent ball game, and this woman acts as their hostess. She serves homegrown peanuts and popcorn, and homemade peanut butter sandwiches and potato chips. Her children help her. Jane and Julia peel potatoes while Freddie pops the popcorn and roasts the peanuts. The children do most of the selling.

In Oregon, a woman earns extra money by serving hot lunches to woodcutters in her vicinity. The men come to cut trees for a lumber mill near her husband's farm and probably stay several weeks. Meals cost very little because she uses homegrown vegetables and canned fruit. Two of her daughters help her. A third daughter is an invalid and does her bit by mending clothes for the woodcutters. Often while the men are eating lunch, she fixes a torn jacket sleeve or sews a button on a sweater. Sometimes she mends socks and shirts which the men bring along in bundles.

In Georgia an FSA woman sells late fresh vegetables to a private school in her local town. She has been doing this for a number of years to earn extra income and a bit of Christmas money. She also sells canned fruit and jellies when she can spare them. This year she sold some tomato juice and soup mixture.

A Tennessee woman sells turkeys at Thanksgiving and Christmas time. Other women do this too, of course - but this woman specializes in fancy-dressed turkeys. She never leaves a pin feather when she picks them and after she has dressed them she wraps them carefully in oiled paper. They are ready then for either the roaster or the skillet.

A number of women sell ducks and geese in the fall. They cater to folk who can't afford or don't like turkey. If they dress their fowl they usually get a higher price. Naturally those who sell geese save the feathers to use or sell. The price for goosefeathers runs about a dollar a pound.

In Illinois a woman has been successful in dressing squabs. She doesn't bother with squabs in summer because she is too busy with her garden and canning, but in the fall she makes a real business of it. She sells not only to grocery stores but to several private customers.

All Farm Security women who earn Christmas money do it, of course, in addition to making their living budget. You may be sure, too, that every penny they spend on Christmas gifts, goes for useful gifts- something to eat or wear or make home more comfortable in their own families.

Undoubtedly two of the most popular ways women earn Christmas money and other income, are through needlework and handicraft. But Farm Security feels that these are so familiar to you it will skip them this time. So here's wishing you the best of luck earning your Christmas dimes, and hoping you will be able to use a suggestion or two you have heard today.

